

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and further examination are requested.

By the current Amendment, claims 5-7, 13, 14 and 16 have been amended, claims 19-31 have been added, and claims 15, 17 and 18 have been cancelled.

Claims 5, 13 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Applicants' admitted prior art as described in the specification. Claims 5, 13 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by Oishi et al. '954. Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oishi et al. '954 in view of Okumura et al. '138. And, claims 7, 14 and 16-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oishi et al. '954 in view of JP '241. These rejections are not believed to be applicable with regard to the newly amended and added claims for the following reasons.

Each of independent apparatus claims 5 and 16 have been amended so as to further distinguish these claims from the references relied upon by the Examiner. In this regard, each of these claims now recite a polishing or processing apparatus that comprises *inter alia*

a processing station... a receiving section... and **a handling table including...a support member having a tapered surface for contacting a circumferential edge of the... semiconductor wafer such that the...semiconductor wafer becomes centered...and a positioning mechanism including a rotatable positioning member for receiving the... semiconductor wafer from said support member and aligning a reference position of the...semiconductor wafer with a predetermined direction.**

Independent method claim 13 has been analogously amended.

The handling table as now claimed is shown in Figure 5 as reference numeral 50, and is described in detail with reference to Figures 7-9 on page 14, line 23 through page 15, line 8 of the original specification, and its operation is described beginning on page 17, line 2 of the original specification. Specifically, the handling table includes support members 52 which have tapered surfaces 52a for contacting an outer circumferential edge of a semiconductor wafer so as to support and center the semiconductor wafer. The handling table also includes positioning members 53 for

receiving the semiconductor wafer from the support members 52 and rotating the semiconductor wafer in a predetermined angular range so as to position the wafer.

The provision of the support member and the positioning mechanism as claimed is significant because this ensures that a wafer will be correctly aligned. In this regard, if centering of the semiconductor wafer is performed by a centering member that contacts a circumferential edge of the semiconductor wafer, and if the centering member remains in contact with the circumferential edge during alignment of a reference position, such as a notch, of the semiconductor wafer, then the centering member can interfere with such alignment by causing the reference position to become non-visible.

To the contrary, according to the present invention, because the semiconductor wafer is removed from the support or centering member before a reference position of the wafer is aligned, there is no concern of the reference position becoming obscured from view by the support or centering member.

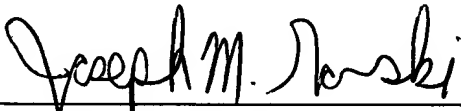
The polishing or processing apparatus, and method, as claimed is not taught or suggested by any of the references relied upon by the Examiner. In this regard, neither Applicants' admitted prior art nor Oishi et al. disclose or suggest a handling table having a support member for centering a wafer and a positioning mechanism for receiving the wafer from the support member and aligning the wafer. None of the other references relied upon by the Examiner resolve these deficiencies, and according, claims 5-7, 13, 14, 16 and 19-31 are allowable over the references relied upon by the Examiner either taken alone or in combination.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

If after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner believes that any issues remain which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative by telephone to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Masao YOSHIDA et al.

By: 

Joseph M. Gorski
Registration No. 46,500
Attorney for Applicants

JMG/edg
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
November 16, 2004